

NSC BRIEFING

22 March 1955

SOVIET FOOD SHORTAGE REPORT

I. Following up discussion of Soviet agricultural situation, US embassy observers have recently reported on the availability of meat, sugar and bread in certain areas of the USSR.

A. This month, in the western Ukraine cities of Kiev and Kishinev, meat supplies were roughly comparable to those a year ago--very little meat in State Stores but adequate supplies on the free market.

1. Both cities are on margin of 1954 Ukraine drought area, where--because of lack of feed--considerable livestock must have been slaughtered by private owners.
2. Greater than usual offerings of meat on the free market would have resulted, with a consequent drop in prices. This explains the report that "current free market prices in Kiev and Kishinev roughly same as state store prices for top grades beef, pork, and veal."

B. In Moscow State Stores, on the other hand, the report states: "Meat is in shorter supply than last year," and cites one observer as saying the shortage is the worst in 9 years.

1. Moscow's free market meat prices are somewhat above last winter's.

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2. Moscow receives much of its meat supply from the upper Volga valley. It seems likely that emphasis is being placed on increasing live-stock numbers in this area, with accompanying low slaughter rates (as contrasted with drought-inspired higher rates of slaughter in the Ukraine).
- II. The same report cites considerable shortages of sugar in Odessa and Kiev, and lesser shortages in Moscow.
 - A. Soviet production of sugar from the 1954 crop of beets was about 200,000 metric tons less than from the 1953 crop.
 - B. In 1953, also, the USSR imported 525,000 metric tons of sugar, almost 90 percent of it from the Satellites.
 1. Subtracting Soviet exports, there remained some 220,000 tons net import available for consumption, in addition to home production.
 2. In contrast, Satellite sugar production in 1954 was down.
 - C. This loss, coupled with lower 1954 domestic production, has cut the USSR's sugar position back and accounts for the reported shortages.
- III. The embassy report states that the bread supply in Odessa and Kiev is good.
 - A. These two cities are not in the area most affected by the Ukraine drought of 1954.

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- B. The overall production of grain, the most important item in the Soviet diet, in 1954 is estimated to be about 3 percent greater than in 1953.
- C. It is entirely possible that local shortages of food, including bread, may soon occur in some cities in the drought-affected areas of south central and eastern Ukraine.
- D. Such food shortages would indicate a failure on the part of the Soviet government to furnish aid from other regions.

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